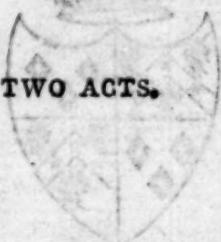


THE
LITTLE FREEHOLDER,

A DRAMATIC ENTERTAINMENT;

IN TWO ACTS.



—*mea regna*—

VIRG.

L O N D O N :

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Anno 1790.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.
SNIP.
BLAST.
SAVON.
ROBERT.
HACQUILL.

WOMEN.

NANNY.
BETTY.

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ACT I.

*SCENE, A Hall in LORD MONTORGUEIL'S
Castle.*

LORD MONTORGUEIL, ROBERT.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Who waits ?

ROBERT.

My Lord !

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Send up the lame bricklayer, whom I keep about *Montorgueil* Castle from charity ; they call him *Blow*, or *Blast*, or some such name.

ROBERT [bawling.]

Will Blast, why Will Blast, quick, quick.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

My house-steward must reprimand you *Robert* for your *maladroit* way, in the executing of commissions. Do as I ordered you.

ROBERT.

I called *Will Blast*, as you ordered, and he

† A

is a-coming ; hear how he stumps on the stairs. Give the man but time. [Exit.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Those home bred servants are insufferably saucy.

BLAST. [Bebind the scenes, singing.]

“ Thus all foes we defy, and each danger we
“ mock,

“ And we'll fight and we'll die in defence of
“ th' Old Rock.”

Enter Blast, broad ruddy face, grey hair, round hat, large green cockade, old uniform of the artillery, wooden leg, stout walking stick.

“ Then stand to't my boys.” [Seeing Ld. Mont. he takes off his hat, and rests on his sound leg, his wooden leg extended.]

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

So, honest *William*, my old soldier, have you finished your work ? Is the hovel removed to the spot which I pointed out ? Is that cursed eye-sore gone ?

BLAST.

Smack and smooth, your Lordship, and the old ground sodded afresh. The work is laid, brick for brick, as it was ; and I have played

both carpenter and thatcher : We of the artillery can turn our hand to any thing. In short, bating the change of position, *Master Tailor Snip* won't know the difference. To be sure, *my* work is more artificer-like ; but he, poor soul, has no notion of them things.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

And is all the paltry furniture removed too, and every thing put in its own place !

BLAST.

Every thing, to the length of the broken Jordan, saving your presence.—But it cost a wounidy deal of trouble to remove the pigs ; they did so grunt and squeek, it was enough to have alarmed the whole parish. At last, I got hold of sow, and then boar followed as quiet as if he had been going upon a *Cow de Maine*.—There was a discovery made.—

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

How ! what ! a discovery !

BLAST.

Yes, your Lordship, I discovered six stone-bottles of right *Collen's gin*. I thought I knew the shape of the bottles, [smiling] ; but,

to be quite sure, I took a sip of each ; and never did I taste better in *Westphalia*. I have tried your *Blackstrap* pretty deep, and your *Nantz*, and your *English-grape Brandy* ; but they are no more to be compared to right *Collen's gin*, than the—than the *French guards* to the Royal Regiment of Artillery.—But what does it argufy, my Lord, to pull down the poor fellow's house among the trees, and then build it up again on the edge of that there common ?

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

His hovel deprived me of an elegant side-view, with a church-spire in the *Lontananza*.

BLAST.

Nancy, anon.—If your Lordship wished to have the house away, *Snip* would have parted with it for a good-smart price.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

I offered him treble its value ; but, No—the coxcomb would not quit it ; he faid, that he could afford to live *independently* on the *freehold* of his *ancestors* ! The *ancestors* of an *independent tailor* ! So I contrived to get this botcher to the Castle, under pretence of em-

ploying him to make new liveries for my stable-boys : here has he been for some weeks, as you know ; and what with four meals a-day, what with romping among the maids, I suppose the hours of our *independent freeholder* have glided gently along, and that he has never bestowed a thought on his pig-house or on his dwelling house.—My house-steward pays him off this evening ; and then he sets out on his return to the seat of his *ancestors*. *This was a ruse de guerre* ; was it not, heh, *Blast* ?

BLAST.

[*In a meditating posture, then says,*] *Reufe de gaire*,—I have heard of it abroad ; but I always thought that broad day-light, clear ground, and fair aim, were much better.—Hold, my Lord ; is there law for removing honest Snip's house ?

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Law ! did you not follow *my* orders ; and do you doubt of *my* responsibility ? It is *I* who must answer for the law.

BLAST.

To be sure, one ought to follow orders.—I had once a dear friend, poor *Dandy M'Turk*

of our company, (but he is gone.) " *Billy*," said he to me ; now *Billy* means *brother* in his Scottish lingo ; and indeed he was always like a brother to me [wipes his eyes] : " so says he, *Billy*," says he, " when privates follow orders " they are *aye* right ; if there be wrong, be- " tween our officers and their consciences be it." I am sure it was *consciences*, or *constituents*, or some such word.—But, may they not *present* me, as they call it, for a nuisance ? I left my best leg at the red-hot-ball battery ; and I should not like to be called a nuisance in my old days.—No—the proudest *he* that steps upon leather, shall never tell *Will Blast* twice, " that he is a nuisance ! "

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Be patient, honest *Blast*, you are of *my* household ; and no one of the household of Lord *Montorgueil* can be a nuisance.—*Snip* goes away presently ; and I wish that, before he goes, you could fill his head with any idle tale of enchantments or witchcraft, that when he misses his *freehold*, as he calls it, he may lay the blame on some sorcerer, and never suspect us.

BLAST.

Never fear. *Dandy M'Turk* had many fine

stories of witches, and I can fit Master Tailor to a hair.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Do so ; and when *Snip* is away, and all the servants gone from about the hall, return you hither, and scratch softly at the door of my study. I have something to communicate of *high* importance to yourself. Meanwhile, I go to finish my dispatches.

[Exit.]

BLAST [*alone*].

I shall be nobly paid for this *extra* job.
 " Thus all foes we defy, and each danger we
 " mock,
 " And we'll fight and we'll die in defence of
 " *th' Old Rock.*" [Exit singing.]

Enter SAVON and ROBERT.

ROBERT.

I wonder what my Lord can see about that noisy bombardeer. He keeps us at a distance, and converses with *Blast* just as if he were one of the gentle folks.

SAVON.

If *that* surprises *you*, who are but a footman, how much more must it *me*, who am

his Lorship's *valet de chambre en second*, and have the advantages of a liberal education, and been connected with the great world? I never knew a man that had visited foreign parts, so ignorant of the *ſçavoir vivre* as *Blast* is—quite a *bore*; gives no body elbow-room, as *Swift*, Dean *Swift*, said of *Mat. Prior*. You love anecdotes, *Robert*?

ROBERT.

I can't tell, I never tasted them. Give me plain roasted and boiled, and enough of both, I am satisfied; I care not for your kick-shaws.

SAVON.

Since I must accommodate my language to your barn-door capacity, I say, *Blast* will not suffer any one to speak but himself,

ROBERT.

Nor drink neither, if he could help it.

SAVON.

Robert, I'll tell you what, don't speak of it unless it come to pass; and, if it do, say that I told you. I fancy that my Lord examines

Blast about the siege of *Gibraltar*, meaning to bring in an inquiry why “the town was not ‘taken.’” When I was in the political line, they often made me say that every thing ought to be followed up with an *inquiry*.—The book-sellers give any money for *important state-papers*, such as an inquiry produces.

ROBERT.

Perhaps there is a girl is the case.—

SAVON.

A girl—no, no : [with a significant smile.] Besides, *Blast* is a man of strict honour ; the guardian of damsels in danger of following their own inclinations. But hold ; stand by, stand by, and make way for the procession.

Enter *SNIP*, carrying a punch-bowl, and followed by *BLAST*, who is supported by the two house-maids *NANNY* and *BETTY*: *SNIP* singing Rule Britania, and *BLAST* singing The Old Rock, each to its own tune.

SAVON.

Here they come ; Squire *Snip of Thimble Hall*, and the magnanimous Knight of the Burning Rock. He looks, for all the world,

like my Lord's coat of arms, a blue lion, supported by two angels.

[*Taking NANNY's hand.*

NANNY.

Oh, Mr. Savon, you are so comical a man.

BLAST.

Comical! don't you know that he was once
merry Andrew to a mountebank doctor?

[*Afide to NANNY.*

SNIP.

[*Flustered*] Silence over all.—His Lordship has paid me my bill, all ready money, and like a man of quality. Mr. Poundage, the steward, has not clipt a farthing off it; and moreover, in approbation of my work, he has presented me with a bowl of punch extraordinary; wherefore, Here is “long life and “healthe to the Right Honourable Lord Mon-torgueil, the Honourable Mr. Poundage, and “all the freeholders of England.” [Drinks.

SAVON.

Not forgetting your noble self, “tho' last,
“not least in love.”

SNIP.

Suppose I were in love, I han't any cause to
be ashamed on't. [BETTY turns aside.]

BLAST.

[*Taking the bowl*] Snip, you are a generous
fellow; and if you were a soldier, you would
be a good soldier.—Snip, should the Spaniards
ever mumble again at our *Old Rock*, I am
sure that you and all other brave lads will
stand forth, as I did while my limbs served
me. [Drinks.]

SNIP.

Thank you, Mr. Blast; but I must serve at
home under our own Lord Lieutenant.

BLAST.

[*Taking the bowl from his lips*] How! have
we got wars at home?

SNIP.

In case of invasion, our Lord Lieutenant
will call us freeholders out, to repel force by
force; and that, as I take it, is agreeable to
the laws and the constitution.

SAVON.

Why *Blast*, my boy, now that you have lost your leg, are you turned *crimp*?

BLAST.

[*Dashing down the punch bowl.*] Crimp, you son of — [recovering himself a little] do you call *ME crimp*, *ME* who defended *Gibraltar*! a *crimp* to the Royal Regiment, that never gives any levy-money worth signifying! I shan't kick you, puppy; it would dishonour my wooden leg to touch your rascally carcase!— Now I am calm; and let me tell you, I know you, and all about you. I say nothing of your father; for an honest man may chance to be hanged upon false evidence, though the jury found guilty *sheep-stealing*.—I say nothing of your mother; for she died in prison before trial. But as for yourself, when I first knew you, you was a ragged boy at the charity-school: then the church wardens bound you apprentice to a barber, but you broke your indentures; and, [turning to NANNY] no man of honour breaks his indentures; *Dandy M' Turk* has told me so a hundred and a hundred times; —then you blew the trumpet to a shew-man; then you became *Merry Andrew* to a mountebank doctor; then you turned printer's devil, and then strolling play-actor; and then you

made news for the new's-men ; then you just grazed upon *Campbell's Academy*, and wrought your passage out of *England* in a *Dunkirk* smuggling cutter ; you found service with a young traveller who knew no better, and, stuck in a large pair of jack-boots, you trotted before your master's carriage, night and day, on a lame post-horse, and so made the *grand tour* ; and now here you are, ready to do any mischief that a chicken-hearted fellow is capable of : Busy in seducing every innocent maid that you can get to listen to your jaw. But have a care ; you may still have a *grander tour* to make ; and, before you are hanged, you may be burges of *Sidney-cove* ; a—

[*Stops, being out of breath.*

SAVON.

Chief city of the principality of *New South Wales*. I have read of the place.—Mr. *Blast*, I respect your gray locks.

BLAST.

You respect my gray locks ; I had rather that you cut them off (I know you can poll), and made me wear a yellow scratch of your own handywork all the days of my life, than that you should respect my gray locks.. Oh that I had not lost my leg ! then they would

have grown white in the service of Old *Eng-*
land and my good dear master !

[*Bursts into tears through passion.*

NANNY.

Compose yourself, sweet Mr. *Blast*, com-
pose yourself : I can't endure to see a brave
man weep like us poor silly girls. [Weeps.]

BLAST.

Oh you are worth all the family.

[*Tenderly.*

SNIP.

Mr. *Savon*, Mr. *Blast*, I see there is a huge
quarrel between you two, and that I am the
cause of it : I can't say how, not knowing any
thing of the matter ; but do, pray, let there
be no more of it.

SAVON.

No man can make greater allowances than
I do, who have seen much of the world—no
man has more of “ the milk of human kind-
ness” than *myself*.

BLAST.

The *four crout* of ill-nature—[*spits*]. I
shall think no more of it, on *this* condition,

that you never utter a word in disparagement of me or of the *corps*; no, you shan't name the *corps* at all. If you do, look you, I'll break every bone of your body, and hang up my cudgel, *this* cudgel, on your monument, should you ever have money enough to purchase a monument.

SAVON.

" And hang my cudgel on your monument," very pretty and poetical, and much after the manner of Rowe. But may I not, without offence, repeat your story of the crow?

BLAST.

My story of the crow! I don't remember any such.

SAVON.

It is odd that you should forget any of your own stories, when you repeat them so often: I speak of the crow that perched on the flag-staff at Gibraltar.

BLAST.

The crow! it was an eagle, a noble and a more than an imperial eagle, the friend of

right and liberty. O! the glorious sight, when it rose from the hill, and hovered in the air, and wheeled, and rested on the flag-staff!

SAVON.

"The friend of right and liberty, hovered,
"and wheeled, and rested on the flag-staff." Good again! pity that the poets who write for magazines and almanacks had not served with Mr. Blaſt at Gibraltar; it would have given them a better notion of *the sublime, than all the works of Boileau's Longchinnus.*

SNIP.

Gentlemen, I rejoice to see you in good humour again. Will you all favour me with your company at breakfast to-morrow, at my little castle. You shall be kindly welcome: there will be independent bacon and eggs, Flanders butter, liberty butter (I got it from my friend *Bob Shorebam*), and a cup of old stingo; and there will be a bowl of suggared furmety for the lasses. I expect to have the company of my kinsman Mr. *Hungerford Hackquill*, an eminent attorney, from London. He has sent me word, that he proposes to take a breakfast from me to-morrow.—You will all come; I have been long from home; it will be a kind of house-warming.

NANNY.

Oh, if it be a house-warming, each of us must bring something. Let me see; I too can get a nice pound of butter from *Bella* our dairy-maid: My Lord lets *Bella* do what she will.

SAVON.

And *Bella* [Blast frowns]—Well, no more of that.—I hope to bring one who must be welcome every where, and particularly down at the grove—*Bet Woodbine*. Besides, I shall bring *myself*; wit and humour, and “the general joy of the company.”

BLAST.

And I a cudgel to check impertinence.

ROBERT.

I don’t understand wit and humour, and the joy of the company; I have nothing to bring but a good stomach.

SAVON.

Look you there; I protest wit is infectious. *Robert* has been but a month in my company.

ROBERT.

No more than three weeks.

SAVON.

Well, three weeks be it ; I thought it had been a long month.—*Robert*, who, like Prince what-do-you-call-him, might have been sur-named *the silent*, has become a dry joker.

SNIP.

Well, I shall expect you all at nine. [*Going*.]

BLAST.

Now, it goes to my heart to say any thing ; but I promised [*aside*].—*Snip*, see that you meet with no witches on your road home. It is very dark and gloomy, and the air has an odd sort of feel, something sulphureous, I think.

BETTY and NANNY.

Good gracious, witches and sulphur !

SNIP.

But do you think that there is any such thing as witches now ?

SAVON.

I am afraid of none but Lancashire witches,
pretty girls.

BLAST.

As to Mr. Savon's fears, I say nothing. But you shall hear a story that *Dandy M'Turk* told us upon guard.—There was a great Lord in Scotland called Lord *Dodinghausen*, and he had his country-seat near a river; and there was a poor man whose house lay between my Lord and the river, and it stopt the view. It was a little cottage, perhaps just such a one as the cottage among the trees, on the right of the approach to *Montorgueil* castle.

SNIP.

Why, man, that is my freehold!

BLAST.

Very likely it may. So my Lord, wishing to get rid of that *pighouse*, offered a purse of gold, ten times its value, to the *beggarly fellow* for the purchase of it: But the *fool* would not hear of the offer; he said, "he would not sell his *freehold* to any Lord in the land."

SNIP.

[*Much agitated during the last speech*] And he did well; though a Scotchman, he acted with the spirit of a Briton,

BLAST.

You shall hear. So Lord *Dodinghausen* went and struck a bargain with the great witch, *Moggy McKiffock*.

BETTY.

McKiffock! what comical names the Scotch have got.

SAVON.

Very pretty and expressive; *McKiffock!*

BLAST.

The witch, one dark night, took up the house and all that was in it, carried it through the air, and set it on the brink of a black nasty bog, where there was nothing to be seen within canon range, but heath as tall as an Hungarian grenadier.

SNIP.

[*Trembling*] Was it really a freehold? are there freeholds in Scotland?

BLAST.

Why aye ; I once marched a detachment to the forts. I acted as corporal. A long day's march it was, all upon the freehold of one private gentleman. But such a country ! it made honest *Toby Molloy* cry out in his droll way, “ Arrah, Honey, we have not met “ with a living soul, but some black cattle.”

SAVON.

Some of *Moggy M'Kissock's* gang, I suppose.

BLAST.

Very likely : But we were upon duty, and did not mind them.

SNIP.

Pray, good Mr. *Blast*, do you think that witches can transmogrify themselves into black cattle ?

BLAST.

As easily as into cats.—But it grows late.
Good night to you all. [Exit.]

SNIP.

[After some silence] These are odd stories,
very odd stories indeed.

SAVON.

Snip, if you are afraid, you had better stay with us in the castle all night.

SNIP.

Afraid! how can you suppose so? What should make *me* afraid? [*cocks his bat fiercely*] Go-o-d n-i-gh-t, “*and manly hearts to guard “the fair.”*” [*Sings in a faltering voice.*]

[Exit.]

BETTY.

Poor man, he is concerned a little in liquor.

SAVON.

No, he is concerned a little for himself.

BETTY.

But do you indeed and indeed think that he will meet with *Moggy M'Kifock*?

SAVON.

What, *Bet!* are you jealous of *Moggy M'Kifock*, that sulphureous *Scotch witch*? Fy, fy, you wrong your charms.—Depend upon it, *Snip* will be safe enough, if his legs can find their way home.

BETTY.

Pray, Mr. Savon, do see him a little way
on the road.

SAVON.

Ask any thing else, and I am your slave.—
But I must run and put my Lord's things in
order: his first *Valet de Chambre* has the
name, while *I* do the *business* of the office.
[going] And can I live to see you a free-
holder's lady? the ninth part of a man!

BETTY.

Better the ninth part of a man, than the
whole of a monkey.

SAVON.

Oh, there is no withstanding such wit; so,
adieu; or, as our worthy friend *Aminadab Snip* more elegantly expresses it, Go-o-d
n-i-gh-t, “and manly hearts to guard the
“fair.”

[Exit.]

BETTY.

Robert, I am sure you will look after poor
good-humoured *Snip*.

ROBERT.

Don't be sure. You never said a civil thing to me before.—The butler is gone a junketing to the inn at the park-gate with my Lord's house-keeper and her company-keeper ; and he has left me the charge of the plate. [Exit.

BETTY.

Then I must go.

[Going.

NANNY.

Why *Bet, Bet Woodbine*, don't you consider your character ! What ! run after a tipsy man, down among the trees at midnight : What will *Savon* say ? he is always talking and jeering. *Snip* is a good soul, and no one will harm him.

BETTY.

Well, I hope it may prove so ; but, as for *Savon*, if I am better than I should be, it is no fault of his.

NANNY.

Come, remember we must do up the drawing-room before our ladies return from the parkgate. *Exeunt.*

Enter BLAST. [Moving slowly, that the sound of his wooden leg may not be heard.

All is quiet.—I hear no more of Savon's clack. [Scratching at the study-door.

Enter Lord MONTORGUEIL.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Well, my good old soldier, why don't you remind me of your own interests? You was hired to keep the turrets of *Montorgueil* in repair, and the pinery, and the hot-wall.—

BLAST.

Yes. And the pig-house, and the perpetual oven. I always keep to bargain.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

But I suppose you expect something extraordinary on this occasion. It was a little out of your way.

BLAST.

A great deal.—However, I leave myself to be considered by your Lordship's generosity.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

There you touch my finest sensibilities. An appeal to the generosity of Lord Montorgueil cannot fail of a generous hearing. Let me tell you, *Will*, that I have always esteemed it among the dearest privileges of illustrious blood, when united with the gifts of fortune, to have it in one's power to reward the humble services of inferiors, and to place them, if not in opulence, at least in an independent station.

BLAST.

Your Lordship speaks just like a great Nobleman.

LORD MONTERGUEIL.

And yet I must say, and I say it with deep regret, that there are noblemen who think that they demean themselves by acknowledging their gratitude, when they chance to meet with any service from a person low in the rank of political subordination. The word *gratitude* sticks in the throat of such a man. But, for my part, I hold that there is a reciprocity in good offices.

• BLAST.

A reciprocity, your Lordship !

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Yes, I repeat it, *a reciprocity*.—But may I rely on your impenetrable silence ?

BLAST.

Never fear : When a friend is in the case, my silence is as impenetrable as the *Old Rock*.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

I perceive, however, that you are somewhat liable to the constitutional infirmity of many a brave man. I think you spoke of *Nantz* and *English-grape* brandy.

BLAST.

Yes, to be sure, now and then a *skreed*, as *Dandy M' Turk* called it, when off duty. No—*Collen's gin* itself shall not make me blab.—But since I have done nothing against law, as your Lordship says, why must I be so very secret ?

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

The reciprocity of good offices may sometimes require a veil of mystery, by reason of

certain connections and collateral dependencies.

BLAST.

Reciprocity ! I have heard the word before.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Then you understand me.—To the point.
What think you of being a letter-man ?

BLAST.

A letter-man !

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Yes, and at two shillings a-day for life !

BLAST.

At two shilling a-day for life !

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

I see your surprise, tho' I took some pains to prepare you. You did not comprehend the extent of the liberality of a *Montorgueil*. My rule is, to confine myself to recommendations in the civil line ; for your sake, however, I am resolved to make a point of *this* ; so you may consider the thing as done.

[Stretching out his hand.]

BLAST [retiring a little].

Love your soul, I have been just such a letter-man these eighteen months past ! Do you think that *the Cock of the Rock*, as we call him, would forget *this leg* ?

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Well, something must be done, and *that* sooon.—But, *Blasf*, since you are so well provided for, why do you work at your old trade of bricklayer ?

BLAST.

Can't make the two ends meet, your Lordship.—A brother soldier travelling with the charge of small children and a rag of a wife, must be served as long as there is any thing here [*striking his pocket*] ; sometimes must borrow upon a pinch. Poor *Snap* lent me three half-crowns a month ago, and it is all unpaid. Besides, there are out-pensioners in this neighbourhood : we have a club once a week ; they are not so well in the world as I ; and I cannot drink strong ale, and let them drink small beer, *Act of Parliament* we call it. At our meetings we talk over old stories, and about the friends we have seen drop.—But I tire your Lordship.

LORD MONTORGUEIL.

Not at all : go on ; I hear you with much pleasure.

BLAST.

Then, as I was saying, I tell them about *Dandy McTurk*, [Here *BLAST* pauses, rests upon his stick, with eyes fixed on the ground; *Lord MONTORGUEIL* goes off silently, and shuts the study-door unperceived by *BLAST*] Poor fellow, that cursed shot took full in the shoulder. I shall never forget his last words. “*Billy*,” said he, “ my time is come ; but “ for goodness’ cause, stand to your gun ;” then he recommended himself, and died as sweetly as a child. On that very day my leg was carried off, so I could not be at his funerals ; but he had all military honours : Never a dry eye in the battalion. Was not that a noble end, fit for an honest man and a good soldier ? Was it not, my Lord ? [Looks up, stands astonished, and then speaks] Decamped ! Why should the articles of war prohibit profane swearing ? “ Something *must* be done, “ and *that* soon.” Yes, you *have* done for me. “ —Gratitude sticks in the throat of some “ Lords.” Not in *yours* ; it will never get beyond your lips.—“ *Reciprocity !* ” it sets my teeth on edge, it is so French : I suppose it is

just as if he had said to me, " Heads I win, " tails *you* lose." I thought that it was against law; but this man, *Lord* they call him, quieted me with his reciprocity. Pay me for a bad action:—it was a bad action, a rich man to tempt a fellow over head and ears in debt: Fy, fy.—Pay me for a bad action, by getting for me *what* I had already by the justice of my General and my King; *that* is too much! I have been his cat's-paw; yes, a filly rascally cat's-paw! Did I ever think that I should live to disgrace you! [looking at his regimental coat]. My old friends at the club will drink their mugs of small-beer jovially and with a good conscience. Poor as they are, they would hurt no man, and least of all an acquaintance and benefactor.—As for me, I am at *Coventry* already.—Now will this Lord skulk and sherk, and leave all the blame on me. I am sure that every body will find out it was I who pulled down the worthy fellow's house; and *that* puppy *Savon*, and the sulky dog *Robert*, will tell it over the whole country.—But I will be beforehand with them: *Snip* shall hear all; let him do with me what he pleases, he cannot think worse of me than I do.

[Exit.]

END OF ACT FIRST.

ACT II.

SCENE, the Country; a Cottage to the side of the Back-Ground.

Enter SNIP as from the Cottage.

What a night have I had ! wandering up and down in search of my poor freehold ; and I find it at last, set down on a corner of the common.—Well, this must be witchcraft.—I am all alone, I wish my kinsman *Hacquill* were come—Oh ! here he is.

Enter HACQUILL, [brown coat, buff waistcoat of Manchester velvet, slouched hat, having a narrow gold lace, switch, and half boots.]

Kinsman *Hacquill*, I am glad to see you, heartily glad to see—but no, I can't be glad to see any thing, and I don't know whether I see any thing.

HACQUILL.

What is the matter, *Snip*, what is the matter ? are you in your right wits, man ?

SNIP.

Last night, oh, last night ! oh the barbarous bloody deed ! would I had never lived to see another day ! [wringing his bands.]

HACQUILL.

Eh, what ! you are too long here, get off the country ! Set your name to this paper, [drawing out of his pocket a blank sheet of paper] ; we can have it sealed and delivered at leisure ; leave the date to me.

SNIP.

Will the setting my name to a piece of white paper put every thing to rights ?

HACQUILL.

Not altogether ; but it may serve to secure your goods and chattles. The conveyance shall be to *me*. No deed of trust can be safely executed ; but you may rely on my honour and secrecy. We lawyers always act, *sub magno sigillo secrecitatibus*—If you don't get away, you are a dead man.—The assizes begin to-morrow, just by ; you will be apprehended, arraigned, tried, found guilty, condemned ; and

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my Lord, before he leaves the town, will order you for execution.

SNIP.

"Apprehended, arraigned, tried, found guilty, and my Lord, before he leaves the town, will order me for execution." What is the meaning of all this?

HACQUILL.

Why, did not you kill a man last night?
felonice murderavit.

SNIP.

I know nothing about felonice; but sure I am I neither murdered David nor Daniel. I murder! I never hurt a hen-chicken in my life.

HACQUILL.

What then could you mean by wringing your hands, and saying, "last night, oh, last night! it was a barbarous bloody deed! " would I had never seen this day!"

SNIP.

Why, last night, as I suppose, some enemies of mine carried off my freehold, my

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eastle, and set it down here on the common, with nothing but pigs grunting and geese cackling round about me ; and *that* distresses me : but if there be law in England, I will have it. Kinsman, you know the law ; what must I do ?

HACQUILL.

In law there is a remedy for every wrong ; and we consider the peculiar glory of *our* law to consist in this, that its remedies are *multifarious*—for example, you may put in a bill of equity before my Lord Chancellor.

SNIP.

What's that ?

HACQUILL.

Equity enlargeth a claim beyond that which the common law alloweth.

SNIP.

[After a pause] No, that won't do—my cause must not go before my Lord Chancellor.

HACQUILL.

Why so pray.

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SNIP.

I think his uncommon law, or equity as you call it, will not enlarge the bill of a gentleman in our way. We have got a bad name, no fault of mine.

HACQUILL.

Well, then, let us go to *Bancum Regis*, as we say in Latin, to the King's Bench. There we will make a declaration, that defendant, aided by John Doe and Richard Roe, and so forth, did, *vi et armis*, carry away your house.

SNIP.

John Doe. I can say nothing to the man. I'm sure there is never such a name in all our parish. As for *Richard Roe*, I know him well; an old blind fidler, that lives three miles off; and I dare fwear that he never groped his way to my freehold. *Richard Roe* carry away my poor castle ! No ; that don't tell.

HACQUILL.

Hah, hah ; why, they are men whom the law always employs in matters of wrong and riot.

SNIP.

The law employs men to commit wrongs
and riots ! *That* is not constitutional, is it ?

HACQUILL.

Stick to your goose, good kinsman, stick to
your goose, and leave law to those who un-
derstand it.

SNIP.

I don't pretend to know much of the law ;
but I think I know something of the consti-
tution, as being a freeholder ; I will have no-
thing to do with your *Bancum*, and your *Roes*,
and your *Does*.

HACQUILL.

Then let us step aside into the Court of
Exchequer : we may take our cause thither,
by supposing the King to have some interest in
your house or its contents.

SNIP.

[Alarmed and in a low voice] I must tell
you a secret ; *Bob Shoreham*, the huckster,
left six stone-bottles of gin with me ; they are
now concealed behind my bed. I hope the
Exchequer will never hear of it.

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HACQUILL.

Oh, there is nothing in that : you must first of all lodge your information as to the counterband goods ; they will be condemned, and you will be handsomely considered.

SNIP.

Mr. *Hacquill*, what do you see in my face that makes you think I would inform, and particularly against my old customer *Bob* ?

HACQUILL.

Well, Well, it is my decided opinion, that this cause be treated in the Common Pleas, as a civil action.

SNIP.

A civil action ! Do you call it a civil action to carry away my freehold ! It was a most uncivil, inhuman, traitorous, tyrannical, diab—

HACQUILL.

Patience, dear *Snip*, remember my *dictum* at the breaking of this cause ; “ Stick to your ‘‘ goose.” I must make out a little note of circumstances for your counsel to amplify, a *memento à consultee*, as the French call it.

Now that they are men like ourselves, we need not be ashamed to use their language.
 [Writing] " *Snip*, Master tailor, Plaintiff."

SNIP.

Add, " and freeholder." But why don't you set down my Christian name?

HACQUILL.

Such names are quite exploded now; you never see them at any genteel shop; they are only used by Jews in the city.—Who is the defendant?

SNIP.

There was no one to defend my castle; I was from home working at my Lord's—I wish honest Mr. *Blast* had been in my castle; he would have defended it as he did Gibraltar.

HACQUILL.

[*Peevishly*] Tell me in plain English, *who* carried away your house?

SNIP.

I don't know.

HACQUILL.

You don't know, you booby ! [Throwing down his note-book] Why, without a defendant you have no cause.

SNIP.

You hurry me too much ; I know one *ac-complish*, as you call it.

HACQUILL

Excellent, an accessory before the fact ; who is it, who is it ? [taking up his note-book].

SNIP.

Moggy M'Kiffock, the great Scotch witch.

HACQUILL.

Witch ! If I remember right, witchcraft is abolished by the statute *Somethingmo Georgis secundi*—Hold, I had forgot, *that* is a law of police, and does not extend to Scotland, and other parts beyond seas.—Where is this accomplice to be found ?

SNIP.

In the Highlands of *Scotland* ; you can't well miss of her, for there is nothing within

a day's march of her habitation but heath and stinking bogs, and black cattle, and hungry grenadiers. Stay, I know a man of her acquaintance, *Dandy M' Turk* by name, of the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

HACQUILL.

[Writing] To be heard of at the head quarters, Woolwich, I presume.

SNIP.

No, he was killed at the red-hot battery of Gibraltar.—But here comes my friend Mr. *Blast*, who will tell you all about it much better than I.

Enter BLAST, walking slow and pensively.

Good-morrow, Mr. *Blast*.—Sad changes since we parted, Mr. *Blast*!

BLAST.

Sad changes indeed!

SNIP.

Do, dear friend, tell my kinsman Mr. *Hacquill*, where *Moggy M'Kissock*, the great Scotch witch, is to be found.

BLAST.

I know no such person.

SNIP.

Not know her? Why, it was no farther ago than yesterday, that you told me fine horrible stories of her pranks, just as *Dandy M'Turk* told them to you.

BLAST.

Dandy M'Turk was a scholar, and believed not a word of such nonsense; but he told great white lies to the young soldiers, that they might keep awake in the guard-house, and *that* of Scotch Moggy among the rest. It was his way, poor fellow, for the good of the service.

SNIP.

But was it for the good of the service, as you call it, to make me believe those frightful stories of witches? Trusting to you and your friend, I thought them all true.

BLAST.

I wished to mislead you, and make you think that the witches carried away your

house, that so the suspicion might not fall on
the person who did it.

HACQUILL.

[Preparing to write] My good Sir, can
you tell us *who* that person is, and *where* he
is to be found !

BLAST.

Yes, it was I.

SNIP.

You!—[Stands amazed and silent for some time]. Mr. Blaſt—Look to the skirts of your waistcoat : I furnished the cloth ; the workmanship is mine ; and I never charged a farthing for either: I see the ſtitches of my own needle in the darning of your coat sleeve ; and you carried away my freehold ! Well, they ſay a ſtanding army is a bad thing ; but in my mind, one Chelsea letter-man is worse than ten ſtanding armies. I have met with much civility from the gentlemen of marching regiments when they came in my way ; but this artillery-man—

BLAST.

Mr. *Snip*, I beg you not to reflect on the corps to which I belonged, unhappily for it; don't judge of it from me; and pray make no comparisons to its prejudice.—I acknowledge your favours; and moreover, I owe you three half crowns, and I am unable to pay the debt.

SNIP.

I never meant that you should. I saw you a soldier disabled in the service of Old England, and I thought you an honest man; so, as I could well spare it, I gave in loan what I suppose you would not have taken as a gift.

BLAST.

[*Hesitating*] *Snip*, I will do for you what I never did for any man.

SNIP.

You have done for me already enough and enough.

HACQUILL.

[*Aside to Snip*] Let him talk, give him time; he is in the humour of saying a great deal. I make memorandums of every thing.

SNIP.

Well, Sir, what have you to say more?

BLAST.

I ask your pardon; I sincerely beseech your forgiveness.

SNIP.

You ask my pardon, and beseech my forgiveness. There you have it, [*stretching out his hand*]. It shall never be said that an Englishman, and a freeholder, refused forgiveness to an enemy who asked it.

HACQUILL.

[*Aside checking him*] Hold, hold, you are spoiling as fine a cause as was ever heard in the courts at Westminster.—Why, he has said enough already to do every but hang himself. I have it all down here. “One or more credible witness.” I am just what the law requires.

SNIP.

[*Looks at him with contempt ; then runs to BLAST, and takes bold of his hand*] Come, old friend, what's past is past, so no more of it.— But what tempted you to remove my freehold?

BLAST.

What has tempted many a one, the wicked hopes of bettering my condition. Alas ! I never thought of what *Dandy M' Turk* often said, “ We must be honest, but we need not be rich ;” and “ Falsehood had never a fair hinder end.” You remember you would not sell your house to my Lord ; so he made me remove it brick by brick, and build it up there.

SNIP.

My Lord ! what ! Lord *Montorgueil*? Why, I was at that very moment employed in making livery jackets for his postillions.

BLAST.

Yes, he found out that employment to keep you from home, while I was doing his dirty job—he called you a botcher.

SNIP.

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Carry away my freehold, and then call me botcher, [*Stamping with his feet in violent passion*]; that is too much.

HACQUILL.

Pray, Mr. *Blast*, that, Sir, I think is your name, did his Lordship give you any money for this dirty job, as you are pleased to call it?

BLAST.

Nothing but my wages as a bricklayer. I looked, to be sure, for something better; the more fault mine: at last I found, when it was too late, that he meant to keep himself out of harm's way, and leave me to be blown up.

HACQUILL.

But he paid you your wages regularly for the work that you did.

BLAST.

Certainly, to give him his due.

SNIP.

Prithee, Kinsman, ask no more questions at my poor friend; you see they make him un-

easy ; will you walk in ? I must get things ready for breakfast as well as I can . *Blast* will help me ; and he shall taste a little of a bottle that you know of . I can use freedom with it .

BLAST.

[*Shaking his head*] Ah ! *Snip*, I could say something about that bottle .

SNIP.

Well, by and by ; Mr. *Hacquill*, give me leave to shew you the way .

HACQUILL.

I had rather remain in the open air till you return . We studious sedentary people are so happy in the change from smoke, and narrow noisy streets, to clear skies, an extensive horizon, and rural tranquillity, that we hold every moment lost which is spent under a roof, however hospitable .

SNIP.

As you choose ; come along, *Blast*. [*SNIP* and *BLAST* go into the cottage .]

HACQUILL alone.

That last period of mine was, I think, pretty well turned; there is nothing like *the speaking societies* for teaching one to express sentiments that one does not feel. A plague of the country, and a plague of all country clients, who have the insolence to judge for themselves. This silly fellow *Snip*, with his meekness and generosity, has disappointed me of one cause; but I know of another, which I shall take the liberty of conducting without his advice or interference. Lord *Montorgueil* has got into a scrape; if he gets easily out of it, blame me. Something considerable might be had in the way of compromise.—But no more of that; reputation, when a young man is just entering into business, outweighs all pecuniary considerations. There again a good phrase—Money will come afterwards; it is fit to lay in a stock of reputation to deal upon.—I must get entered—There must be a trial—then I may chance to read in the daily papers, “for the plaintiff, the King’s counsel, and Mr. Serjeant *Circumbendibus*; attorney, Mr. Hungerford Hacquill.” Very pretty *that*, to have one’s name in good company.—An acquaintance of mine will take in a paragraph

from me, about the modesty, ingenuity, and disinterestedness of the young gentleman.

Enter SNIP.

SNIP.

I have left *Blast* busy in slicing down the bacon—But here comes *Robert*. I hope you will excuse me for having invited a servant to breakfast in your company. Indeed I could not well get by it, as you shall hear afterwards.

Enter ROBERT.

Well, *Robert*, I see you are punctual to your engagement; but *this* is not the place where you expected to breakfast.

ROBERT.

Give me good victuals, and it does not signify where I eat them. But I have a message to deliver to one *Hacquill*.

HACQUILL.

My name is Mr. *Hacquill*.

ROBERT.

You shall have the message just as I got it.
“ Tell my lad *Hacquill* to come directly to

" the castle ; I want him to transcribe some
" papers that I can't take the trouble of
" transcribing myself." These are the very
words of Counsellor *Bonnefoy's* clerk.

SNIP.

Why, kinsman, I thought you had been an
eminent attorney !

HACQUILL.

Not very eminent yet. I am, for the
time being, secretary to Counsellor *Bonnefoy's*
clerk ; a necessary man, as you hear. Busi-
ness must be done, and my moments are pre-
cious : so adieu. [Exit.

Enter BLAST.

BLAST.

I am glad the lawyer is gone—he questioned
me as if I had been a spy—We had once
such another, a recruit in our battalion ; a
likely fellow enough, and ready at his exer-
cise ; but full of talk withal, and a mischief-
maker among the young soldiers. Luckily
he took to the stealing of tobacco-boxes ; so
he was whipt, by the judgment of a court-

martial, and drummed out ; and then all was good humour and quietness again.

Enter SAVON leading BETTY, with his gloves drawn on.

SAVON.

Good-morrow—Some philosophers remark, that a young man of suspicious morals may, by prudence and modesty, white-wash his reputation. Here, *Betty* has been pleased to entrust herself alone with the gay *Lothario*, meaning your humble servant. Ask herself whether I did not behave “ in groves and meads” with the most punctilious *decorum*.—But my charge is weighty ; and I resign it to this respectable gentleman, whose matured age and known honour will be the guardians of virgin innocence, and a sure protection against all young bachelors, whether *freelivers* or *freeholders*.

BLAST.

What have you done with *Nanny* ?

SAVON.

Nanny, alas ! was so much affected last night with the tears shed by a brave man, that she had like to have fallen into fits. My

Eau de Luce and the housekeeper's bottle were applied; and the cook-maid burnt the feathers of half a dozen fowls under her nose.—She is somewhat better—far from being well; still low, very low indeed.—But I hope there is nothing in her condition seriously to alarm her admirers, “all who know her, all who love” dear lovely Nanny!

BLAST.

Savon, is all this story true?

SAVON.

Not a syllable of it; I made it off hand, for the amusement of this good company. Nanny was called away to see a sick friend in the neighbourhood; don't mistake me; not a lover, but a silver-hair'd, lame, old—woman. This is the truth, upon my honour.

BLAST.

Young man, the less you say about *Nanny* the better.

SAVON.

I beg your pardon.—How could I know that she fell under the capitulation, as belonging to a certain *corps* that must be nameless?

But pray, *Snip*, why quit your house without leaving a ticket behind you, “ Removed to the common ? ” The omission might have ruined your credit.

SNIP.

I fancy, *Savon*, that you knew something about the carrying away my freehold.

SAVON.

Not I, as I hope to be married.—I was not in the secret. My Lord of late has been pleased to withdraw his confidence from *me*. Whether his Lordship’s measures, since I was excluded from the cabinet, have been conducted with superior secrecy, or with more success, than formerly, it would be presumption in me to say.—As to situations, I think you have exchanged much for the better. [Takes out his glass and looks about him]. A fine extent of country, and prettily diversified. Pray, what distant prospect is that ? I see a sort of building, I can’t tell what.

BLAST.

No distant prospect ; a gibbet.

SAVON.

For the honour of your prognostications, venerable Seer, be pleased to make them more consistent. Last night you promised to settle me a burges in the borough of *Sidney-Cove*; and now you abridge my eventful history, and limit it within the narrow compass of this county.

BLAST.

Well, well, all in good time [furlily.]

SAVON.

That *côteau* is picturesque; I admire its gentle sweep. Were it planted with vines, as I have seen abroad, it would be much better.

BLAST.

Better as it is—it produces good barley to make strong ale and strong beer. I was once a prisoner in France: our party was cut off; I won't say by whose fault; and I know somewhat of their wines.—Why, every thing that is good is sold into foreign parts, or used by their gentle folks.—Their brandies to be sure are excellent.—But commend me to old England, where every tradesman or labourer may

have for his money as good strong ale and as good strong beer as the first Duke in the land.

ROBERT.

This is fine talking; but I wish I saw some of the liquor. You are all so fond of prate, that you forget breakfast. I did not come here to prate, I never liked it.

SNIP.

Step in, good *Robert*, and you will find something more to your liking. [*Robert enters the cottage.*] If you please, we will follow him.

BLAST.

Hold, I have a commission from my Lord, which I promised to deliver.

SNIP.

After what has passed, I did not expect that the man at the castle would give me any more trouble and vexation.

BLAST.

Have patience a little, and hear me out— You must know that Counsellor *Bonnefoy* called this morning at the castle, on his way

to the assizes. My Lord, while I was standing by, told him how cleverly he had got rid of your house. The Counsellor, after thinking a while, said, "Bury it, my Lord, bury it directly."

SNIP.

"Bury it; bury my castle!" There is neither law nor constitution in England; and the Counsellors are as bad as the Lords. Well, they may bury it; but they shall bury me in the ruins. [Runs to the door of the cottage.]

ROBERT.

[Coming hastily out with a pitcher in his hand.] What, what, "buried in the ruins!" What's the matter?

SAVON.

Hah, hah; nothing but a metaphor; so go in, Robert, and empty your pitcher in peace and privacy.

ROBERT.

So I will. Since you are not afraid, I am sure there is no danger. [Goes into the cottage.]

SNIP.

What makes *Savon* laugh? does he too mean to insult me?

BLAST.

Be quiet, and you shall be satisfied. Counsellor *Bonnefoy* advised my Lord to see and get matters made up if possible; for I suppose he thought as how if the thing took air, the Nobility would not do duty with his Lordship; so my Lord sent me to ask what indemnification you expect.

SNIP.

Take back my freehold to its own place; build it up “brick for brick,” as it was: these were your own words; I know you can do it. Then let him call at my door and ask my pardon, and he shall have it.

BLAST.

Your house shall be set down in the grove again, with all its contents.—But I am afraid that Lord *Montorgueil* will be startled at the proposal for his asking pardon in so public a manner; might you not go to the castle, and then my Lord could make a private apology?

SNIP.

I go to the castle ! I'll see him hang'd first. I believe I should say beheaded. I am as good a man as himself, though not so rich, and as much a member of the Legislature as he is. I wonder why he should injure me, as the worthy Counsellor told him he had done, and then scruple to ask my pardon. *That was not your way of thinking, Mr. Blaſt, you who fought at Gibraltar.*

BETTY.

If a Yorkshire lass might be allowed to lend in her word, I think that this is a much pleasanter situation than down in the grove. There was nothing to be seen there. I am sure the house smoked, did it not ?

SNIP.

I can't say ; perhaps sometimes ; but the smoke of my own house is comfortable.

BETTY.

Yes ; but my own house, I should say *yours*, is much more comfortable without smoke ; and then you have here hills and hedges, and corn-fields, and grafts-fields, and the turnpike-

road, with waggons and dillies, and the sails
of boats moving among the trees ; it is for
all the world like my own town of Wake-
field. Well, I could pass all my life here,
were it never so long. Stay where you are,
I advise you. And as for getting his Lord-
ship to say a few words to you by way of
asking pardon, better get a good purse of guineas
from him. *That* will help you more,
and your family too, should you ever have
one, than all his fine speeches. I know that
great folks can make fine speeches when they
mean no good.

SAVON.

Hold, hold, *Bett.*

BETTY.

Aye, and great folks *valet de cbams* too :
there you have it, for stopping me when I was
in the fancy of talking.

SAVON.

Shall so fair a counsellor plead in vain ?

SNIP.

I have thought better of it. *This* place
shall be *Betty Woodbine's* ; and I am sure she
will not leave me without house or home.

SAVON.

How eloquent is love ! The punch at the castle made him talk fast enough, but never so much to the purpose. Did it, *Bett* ?

BLAST.

Well then, what shall my Lord give for a full discharge? I think a hundred pounds will not be much out of the way ; and he allowed me to go so far.

BETTY.

We don't love higgling in our country ; I say, a hundred gold guineas, new from the mint.

SNIP.

You hear what she says.

BLAST.

Granted.

BETTY.

[*Looking towards the common*] There is room enough here. Mr. Snip must have twelve geese, with liberty of the common.

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SNIP.

You hear what she says.

BLAST.

Granted.

BETTY.

Moreover, fix pigs, with liberty of the common.

SNIP.

Ask no more, my dear; we have got enough.

BLAST.

Granted; and if you choose, *Savon*, in his laced liveries, shall drive the pigs to the common, on the day that you take possession.

SAVON.

Stop there—I am no party to the capitulation—But will not the fair Eliza invite us to this long-looked-for repast of independent butter, eggs and bacon?

(63)

BLAST.

Savon, you will be a play-actor and a puppy to the end of the chapter.

SNIP.

Now all is settled ; and may peace and harmony continue, and every man enjoy his own freehold.

THE END.

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1853

